



MARY MATUJA

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples.” -Mother Teresa

Six-year-old Mary (Marya) — shoeless, surviving on berries in the forest, while hiding from the bombs and Nazi troops who invaded her small Czechoslovakia village — could have never expected to be spotlighted here on the Grosse Pointe Shores website today! Mary lived in Europe until she was 10, when she traveled by herself to live with her mother in Michigan.

At Utica High School, Mary had the formative experience of being elected Governor of Girls State, where she shadowed Governor G. Mennen Williams for a day, inspiring her career in public service. She studied at Macomb College and Oakland University and briefly worked as a model in the Detroit area and Canada.

Mary’s been active in local government for (an unbelievable) 50 years. She was elected to Roseville’s city council and later became its Mayor Pro Tem in the 70s. The Detroit Free Press published a story about her work on the council, where was known to take opposing positions from fellow member, and husband, Robert Matuja.

She has served on Grosse Pointe Shores Planning Commission for more than 30 years and a good chunk of that time as its chair, where she serves today. Mary was also elected as the Grosse Pointe Township Supervisor after serving as Township Clerk for a number of years. Mary was the first – and the last – woman to serve as Township Supervisor. While Supervisor, she voted in favor of incorporation and consequently voted herself out of a job!

The fight against cancer is one that Mary has fought since the 1960s. She has served on the board of directors for the Karmanos Cancer Institute. She was also elected the Macomb/St. Clair County Michigan Works Chair, where she’s helped Michiganders find jobs, training and other support for more than three decades.

While accomplishing all of these things, Mary has been married to Bob for 62 (!) years, and raised three daughters, whom she calls, “Sisters In Law,” (as they all became lawyers). She is also the proud grandmother to eight grandchildren, who frequently both challenge and inspire her. She also recently published a memoir, “Hello America,” a chronicle of her journey from war-torn Czechoslovakia to the land of “Golden Opportunities.”

‘A grateful American’
Mary Matuja

